

BUPRESTIS

A semi-annual newsletter devoted to the dissemination of information about buprestids and students of this group

Editor: Hans Mühle
Hofangerstr.22a
D-81735 München

Germany

Dear friends,

The new deadline for the next issue of BUPRESTIS will be 15. December 1998.

Best wishes

Hans Mühle
Editor

A. RESEARCH ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS

Dr. Sebastian ENDRÖDY-YOUNGA has retired as the Head, Coleoptera Dept., Transvaal Museum now Chuck is „acting" head.

Maureen DUANE is conducting research in the Pacific north-western United States on buprestids and cerambycids and response to prescribed burning.

Roman HOLYNSKI wrote: I am now working on a revision of the Indo-Pacific representatives of *Psiloptera* Sol. and related genera (*Capnodis*, *Dicercomorpha*, *Touzalinia*, *Dicerca*, etc.) with phylogenetic analysis of the subtribe Psilopterina Lac. as a whole; it must be finished by the end of this year. The work is reasonably advanced, I have seen rather extensive material, but there still remain important gaps as well as taxonomic (I have never seen *Psiloptera* [??] *comottoi*, *P. holynskii*, *Dicercomorpha* [?] *vitalisi*, *Touzalinia psilopteroides siamensis*, *Dicerca vitalisi*), as in distributional sense; for the phylogenetic analysis of the subtribe I would need to examine representatives of the „genera“ (I doubt whether all are valid and/or belong to or near the Psilopterina, but cannot be sure without seeing them) *Asidoptera*, *Fahraeusia*, *Embrikillium*, *Strandissa*, *Monosacra*, *Cordillerita*, *Kheilia*, *Eububastes*, *Strandiola* and *Bubastoides*. Some of them I will probably find in Paris or Prague (if I manage to go there this year ...), but certainly not all, and anyway notes made in a hurry during a visit in foreign museums are by far not equivalent to the possibility of quiet study and comparisons of the respective specimens at home, so I will be very grateful to anybody who could send me for examination any psilopterine material from the Indo Pacific (i.e. from the area north of Australia, east of Pakistan, south of Himalayas and Manchuria) and/or any representatives of the above-mentioned genera from other regions!

B. SPECIES WANTED FOR RESEARCH OR EXCHANGE

C. REQUESTS FOR LITERATURE

D. FORUM

Lucía ARNÁIZ has sent a note that Antonio COBOS SÁNCHEZ is very ill and that he is unable to answer mail. His collection is now in the National Museum of Natural Sciences in Madrid and is open to anybody for studies.

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What would I do without Chuck BELLAMY's letters? Here his news for the buprestophilous world:

I received word from Gilbert LISKENNE, our colleague in Paris, that André DESCARPENTRIES died at the end of May.

The World of Buprestidae web page has received significant upgrade and can be found at:

<http://www-tm.up.ac.za/coleop/bups.htm>

A checklist of Australian Buprestidae has been completed as the first step to produce a full catalogue for the Zoological Catalogue of Australia series. The project is being done with the terrific little taxonomic database program *Platypus*.

The plan suggested for the next international meeting proposed in the January issue has not yet had one direct reply. Some might be waiting for more detail or some might be discouraged by my news about the need for collecting permits. Well, here are further details:

Firstly, Sybille GUSSMANN and I visited Erik HOLM during late June and discussed the plan. We all agree that November will be the best time for visitors to expect little competition for the facilities, prior to the school holidays, but after the normal time for the summer rains to begin. Therefore collecting should be good.

The current costs at the venue (Die Ring) are as follows:

There are 14 backpacker beds of which several are paired in individual rooms. The common shower and toilet facilities are shared. These cost R 30 per day per person.

There are 23 beds available in the chalets, which come with individual bath and toilet facilities. These cost R 110 per person per day.

The estimates for meals are an average of R 75 per day per person for three days. There will be an option of having group meals prepared, at least for supper.

If we have enough people submit statements of interest, we can reserve the entire facility for a fixed daily rate and the share the savings according the desired accommodation level.

What I need now is a more firm commitment from those who are interested to join us. In addition to Erik, Sibylle and myself, the following people have stated their interest:

Svata BÍLÝ, Jerry DAVIDSON, Maurizio GIGLI, Stephan GOTTWALD, Mark HANLON, Brian LEVEY, Ted MACRAE, Hans MÜHLE, Magnus PETERSON, Michael POWELL, Mark VOLKOVITSH, Rick WESTCOTT, Geoff WILLIAMS.

I would request that those who are definitely interested in attending, should let me know by January along with tentative titles of presentations or papers. I propose that we will stay at the facility for five days, arriving Sunday, meeting officially starting on Monday and departing on Friday. Thereafter we will arrange collecting trips for the group, according to interest, or advise you as to places to go and help you with access to hiring transportation and booking accommodation should you wish to travel in smaller groups to various destinations.

With any luck we can use the meeting as an official launch date for the world catalogue and perhaps the first volume of the Monograph of the Buprestidae of Africa series

Now with regards to collecting permits. Friends, you may chose to do what you want, but as a resident of South Africa, it would not proper if I failed to inform you about changes in local laws that might affect your visit here. As one of the professional entomologists in South Africa, I believe that the types of South African insects should reside in our national collections, certainly new types, so I am not generally in favour of many people coming here and taking our bottles full of specimens that might be handed over to other colleagues without further thought to the heritage of this country. You might argue that specialists are the best to decide where types should be placed, and while that may or may not be true, I will not discourage you from collecting here, but I will expect, especially from my colleagues, that some regard to my responsibilities are understood. So if I assist you in obtaining collecting permits, I will expect that you will cooperate with my needs to help document the natural history of this country. While I do not believe that this will be an major problem or stumbling block to our planned meeting or our individual cooperation, I cannot condone collecting that will be done solely to the aim of recouping the cost of the trip, by making specimens available for commercial events such as the major insect bourses held in Europe.

And to anyone who thinks that I am advancing the philosophy of „collecting is wrong“ or that one would be a criminal to collect here, that is nonsense. Many parts of the world protect certain species, some insects, and while the laws are often not supported by scientific data, it is still the law. I had to obtain permits to collect in Western Australia, although not everyone would feel the need to do so. If you chose to ignore my comments, that is your right.

This is an important issue to be spelled out to our colleagues:

From Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature, December 1997, Vol. 54(4)216-218: **Fourth Edition of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature: notice of new provisions**.

Commentary on revisions subsequent to the draft version circulated in 1996. The new code will be published with the new rules in place from 1 January 1999 and new procedures about

- 1) proposals of new names;
- 2) lectotype designations;
- 3) matters affecting neotypes;
- 4) changes affecting publication; and
- 5) measures empowering authors to act in the interests of preserving established usage.

The most important change, in regard to some ongoing debates held in our newsletter, is worded as follows:

"When the name-bearing type of a species-group taxon proposed after 1998 consists of a preserved specimen or specimens, the proposal will be required to include a statement naming the public institution (not private collection) in which the name-bearing type will be deposited."

I'm not inventing this but making it widely known that anything published after 1 Jan. 1999 must have the primary type deposited in a public institutional collection.

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To this item Roman HOLYNSKI has sent some remarks. He focuses in his letter all his disillusionment to Chuck. As far as I know - and Ted writes it below - there are more persons who believe that type material is better preserved in a public institution. Perhaps we can all agree to a handling which allows the worker to keep the species as long as it is needed by him for future studies in his private collection, but in the description of a new taxon there must be already decided and written where the type will be preserved. How to arrange this will depend on the agreement between institution and specialist. We don't live forever and we must take care of that our successors will have the opportunity to continue the work instead of struggling with the family of the deceased entomologist!

Now back to Roman's line of reasoning:

Chuck writes about the regulation in the new code, prohibiting description of new taxa based on specimens from private collections, as about something sure, and seems to be exceedingly satisfied, as if he had personally won a great victory, rejoicing in advance at refusing to include names of some colleagues in his catalogue etc.! As to me, I do not understand either his satisfaction of troubles several colleagues would have as a result of such regulation, or his very acceptance to the idea which, in fact, is decidedly harmful to the science! I am afraid, Chuck does not truly realise the consequences of such regulation! He speaks - I hope, honestly - very much about cooperation and mutual help, but in my opinion the starting point of any cooperation should be what is known in medicine as „HIPPOCRATES' rule“: *primum non nocere* - first of all, do not cause harm!

I understand that some bosses of big institutions wish to have the monopoly for scientific work, I understand that some well-positioned but not too wise „authorities“ would like to minimise competition by the elimination of „amateurs“ not working in major museums (or at least by making their work still more difficult and less effective), but when a serious taxonomist militates for such splendid ideas as invalidation of names based on species in private collections, or forcing entomologists to make „obligatory gifts“ of their most important specimens to „public“ museums, then the HIPPOCRATES rule is certainly not observed: such activity has not only nothing to do with fruitful cooperation, but is extremely harmful to (at least entomological) taxonomy in general! I do hope that the members of the Commission will be wise enough not to include such stipulations into the Code - but if they nevertheless do, it will be certainly a tragedy to me and many other workers, in practice depriving us of the possibility to do serious work! But it will be very harmful to all serious entomotaxonomists: also to those working in major „public institutions“!

Suppose Chuck will work on the revision of a group of the *Coraebina* Bed. (or anything else) and have received material including interesting new species as a loan from me, Thierry SAINVAL, or other „private collector“ - what will he do? Will he describe the species, knowing that the names will be invalid? Will he describe them and deposit the holotypes in a „public institution“ against the owner(s) disaccord? Or will he

renounce from the description of those species, consciously making the revision defective??? I do not see any acceptable solution - one could only choose between very bad and still worse! And this is only one - and relatively simple at that! - potential trouble (perhaps still more serious will be the further deepening of distrust between the colleagues working in major museums and universities and those doing their work on their own cost, with the obvious - but profitable to whom??? - result of „burial“ of much important material in collections whose owners will - rather understandably... - refuse even to show them to others; this situation is already well known e.g. in archaeology, where many things of potentially great scientific value remain forever unknown to specialists only because the collectors know that if they do not wish to be „legally“ robbed of their collections, they must keep them in secret)! *Quidquid agis, prudenter agas et respice finem* - whatever you do, do it wisely and think about the consequences ... !

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Fellow buppies:

I for one applaud the ICZN decision to require holotype deposition in a public institution.

I have read the opinions by "private workers" in previous issues of the BUPRESTIS newsletter, who argue bias by public institutions against private workers and a resulting difficulty in obtaining type material for future study. While I concur that it is more difficult for a private worker to obtain types from museums, it is not impossible - and there is no provision against visiting the museum to study the type in person (travel funds being a limit, of course). This may not be to our liking, but it is certainly necessary, and the public institution cannot be blamed. They are charged with guaranteeing the preservation of valuable specimens for all future workers. This does not mean that they think workers with institutional support are more trustworthy, they simply have a preexisting institutional relationship that gives the loaning institution greater power to maintain oversight over the specimens they loan out. My experience has been that once a private worker demonstrates competence in the field and establishes a "sponsor" relationship with a public institution, then institutions will loan types to private workers.

Nevertheless, I do not believe that the increased difficulty that private workers face in borrowing types from public institutions provides a realistic argument towards allowing types to be retained in private collections. I believe that such types are even less available for future study by other workers, regardless of their support status. A private worker who is not willing to deposit types in a public museum, where some amount of access exists, is certainly not going to mail types out to any person who writes and asks unless they already know and trust the person very well. In my own work, I have had much poorer success in borrowing specimens from private workers than public museums, even when no type material is being requested. In a current generic revision I am doing, public institutions sent me types for 5 of the 6 known species, a Fabrician type being the single hold out. Every museum sent me all or most of their non-type material. However, only a handful of private workers even acknowledged receipt of my request, most of whom I already knew well. Some private workers did respond to my request, explaining that they didn't know me and as such would have to decline my request, and one even went so far as to say that he reviewed his material and did not agree that anything needed revising.

I believe that there is a selfish motive for private workers wanting to retain types in their own collection. They place higher priority on their private collection than on the long-term quality of the science.

Ted C. MACRAE

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MEXICO IN SPRING

by Rick WESTCOTT

My colleague Alan MUDGE and I spent March 26 to April 7 in Mexico. It is the normal dry season; however, this time was the worst in memory, with many fires in the forests. Add all that smoke to the normal dust and other pollution in the Mexico City area.....terrible! Otherwise, the trip was a success to escape the dreary cold weather of Salem. Almost every day was clear (relative term!) with high temperatures from about 27-33° C. Most nights were comfortable, but one dropped to 6° C. The drought had another good side:

We didn't see one mosquito or chigger! However, I collected only one species of Buprestidae, *Chrysobothris inaequalis*, that in burned areas at around 3,000 m. Alan collected one specimen of a small *Agrilus* by beating.

We began the trip with our entomologist friend, Armando EQUIHUA, who lives in Texcoco, on his monthly research and teaching jaunt to the avocado orchards near Uruapan, which is billed as the "Avocado Capital of the World". It was interesting to learn about their avocado pests, the worst of which seems to be a weevil infesting branches and twigs (alas, not a buprestid!); however, the highlights were eating "charales", a sardine-like fish from a local lake; and breakfast in Pátzcuaro by the lake of the same name, famous for its "butterfly fishermen". Then, on April 1, Alan and I rented a car and drove an 1330 km loop to the Gulf Coast (State of Veracruz) and back. On the way we drove up Cofre de Perote, and extinct volcano, to an elevation of about 3,900 m. There are fir forests at around 3,000 m, with pines lower down; however, views were all but absent because of the fires burning! In Veracruz, parts of the coastal plain and the middle elevations inland were much greener. We encountered a few beautiful areas of tropical hardwood forest, but most of the entire region has been disturbed by coffee plantations, orange groves, fields of sugar cane, etc.; and, most notably, land cleared for cattle. We visited the ruins of Zempoala. It was closed when we arrived in the early morning; however, we gained ready access from the bordering sugar cane fields--the price was right! Then we drove directly up the coast, all the while enjoying beautiful pink-flowered trees. This area, much greener, harbored quite a few butterflies, which were notably absent elsewhere. We turned inland through Poza Rica (a large town which seemed dominated by the national petroleum industry), then up into the mountains to spend the night in the lovely town of Xicotepec. On the way we battled heavy holiday (Semana Santa) traffic, with many slow-moving trucks and buses. Although the highway at one point was lined with stands selling beautiful mamé fruits, we chose not to stop, as we would lose the ground gained passing those vehicles. Next day we visited a reserve with strange rock formations--which we call "hoodoos" (one was like the head of a baboon)--then turned off the beaten path to the quaint town of Agua Blanca.

We were surprised to find a hotel--unimposing, but clean. Our lodging averaged only \$9.59/night (that is for two!), and the places we stayed had secure inside parking and were within easy walking distance for beer and good food.

Next day we visited Parque Nacional El Chico, a heavily wooded high mountain area near Pachuca, capital of Hidalgo, a beautiful sunny place for a hike. Unfortunately, a large area had burned. Often such places are good for insect collecting; however, we collected only one, a species of wood wasp that occurs right here in Oregon! At this point Alan suggested we splurge and spend the night in touristy El Chico, located nearby at 2500 m. We could not find a place to stay, but I found a wall into which to back the car! Though we had to spend the night in the "Big City", we had a great dinner--but it was Sunday and no beer was sold! On our return to Texcoco we visited the nearby "Piramides de Teotihuacán. We climbed them both, pyramids of the "Moon" and "Sun". I recommend an early morning visit, contrasted with the human horde I met last summer on a Sunday afternoon! We spent our last full day in Mexico with two students of Armando's, a forest pathologist and entomologist, who took us to a forestry research station high in the mountains south of Mexico City. We had a great time with those fellows, even caught a few beetles as we wandered through an area on fire! Overall it was an interesting if not entomologically successful trip (but hey, this was vacation!); however, I doubt I'll ever go again to the Mexican mainland during spring.

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Addresses of yet unknown authors and address changes:

Dr. Karl-Heinz APEL
Landesforstanstalt Eberswalde
Abteilung Waldschutz
Alfred-Möller-Straße
D-16225 Eberswalde

Germany
e-mail: apel@ffe-ebw.bar.shuttle.de

Zhong-liang PENG

Leonard PHILIPPE
48, Avenue du Parc
B-4053 Embourg
Belgium

Maureen DUANE
Oregon State University
Dept. of Forest Science
duanem@ccmail.orst.edu

R. L. ALTEN
7784 Malachite Avenue
Rancho Cucamonga, CA 91730
U. S. A.

Vit KUBAN
Moravian Museum
Dept. of Entomology
Hviezdoslavova 29a

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